

APPENDIX B

IMPLEMENTING AREA DESIGNATIONS AND GUIDANCE FOR SITE-SPECIFIC PLANNING

INTRODUCTION

Background

The off-highway vehicle (OHV) final environmental impact statement and proposed plan amendment (FEIS) for Montana, North Dakota and portions of South Dakota (excluding the Black Hills National Forest, Buffalo Gap National Grassland and Fort Pierre National Grassland) is a programmatic planning document and is intended to provide the environmental analysis and disclosure needed to amend OHV area designations in Forest Service (FS) land and resource management plans (forest plans) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) resource management plans. The BLM and FS (referred to as “the agencies”) are joint lead agencies responsible for preparation of the FEIS. To the extent possible, the agencies will coordinate the field implementation of the decision.

The FEIS addresses the impacts of motorized wheeled (motorcycles, four-wheel drive vehicles, sport utility vehicles, all-terrain vehicles, etc.) OHV travel on areas currently available to motorized wheeled cross-country travel. It amends forest plan and resource management plan OHV area designations on approximately 15.9 million acres. This designation limits/restricts motorized wheeled cross-country travel yearlong under BLM or FS regulations (43 CFR 8342 or 36 CFR 295). This plan amendment does not change the current limited/restricted yearlong or closed

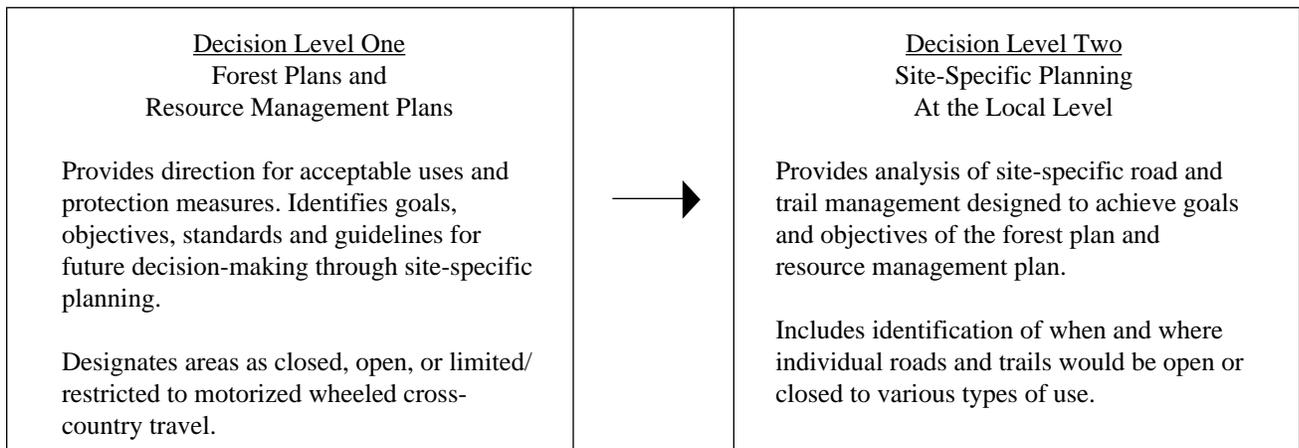
designations, or designated OHV intensive use areas. Site-specific planning would address OHV use on specific roads and trails. Under the preferred alternative, “new” user-created routes are not allowed and would be closed.

The programmatic FEIS is not intended to change existing site-specific direction to close areas or trails to the traffic types causing considerable adverse effects (43 CFR 8341.2 or 36 CFR 295.5). Identifying affected areas or trails may occur through normal administration and monitoring or may be the result of public input.

Planning Process

EIS/Plan Amendment: Planning for units of the National Forest System (NFS) and for BLM lands involves two levels of decision (Figure B.1). The first level, often referred to as programmatic planning, is the development or amendment of forest plans and resource management plans that provide management direction for resource programs, uses, and protection measures. Forest plans and resource management plans and associated amendments are intended to set out management area prescriptions or decisions with goals, objectives, standards, guidelines, terms, and conditions for future decision making through site-specific planning. This includes the designation of areas as closed, open or restricted/limited to motorized wheeled cross-country travel. The environmental analysis accomplished at the plan amendment level guides resource man-

Figure B.1 Decision Levels for Travel Planning



agement decisions on public lands and aids, through the tiering process, environmental analyses for more site-specific proposals. The FEIS is a programmatic document.

Site-Specific Planning: The second level of planning involves the analysis and implementation of management practices designed to achieve goals and objectives of the forest plan and resource management plan. This is commonly referred to as project, activity, or site-specific planning that requires relatively detailed information, including the location, condition, and current uses of individual roads and trails and the identification of when and where individual roads and trails will be open or closed to various types of use. This step is accomplished through the site-specific planning process at the local level, and is dependent on the availability of funds and resources. A prioritized list of areas for site-specific planning would be completed within six months after the signing of the Records of Decision (ROD) for the FEIS.

For the BLM, the prioritization of areas and site-specific planning would be consistent with the final land use planning manual and handbook (Manual 1600 and Handbook H-1600-1) and any future OHV planning policy. This includes the need to make road and trail designations or redesignations through the land use planning process (43 CFR 1600).

PLAN AMENDMENT DECISION - AREA DESIGNATIONS

Introduction

The management direction in the FS ROD would affect forest plans somewhat differently depending on the existing standards and guidelines. Forest access management standards and guidelines would be changed to be consistent with direction from the ROD.

The BLM ROD would amend resource management plans depending on the current OHV area designations. The approval of a resource management plan amendment constitutes formal designation of OHV areas. Public notice of redesignation would be provided through publication of a ROD notice in the Federal Register.

Implementation of plan amendments on NFS and BLM lands would require modifications to current information and enforcement measures. These modifications would include: orders/notices, maps, signs, education/enforcement, and monitoring.

Orders/Notices

Forest Service - Implementing the Montana, North Dakota and South Dakota OHV area designations would require 36 CFR 261.50 orders for each national forest and grassland. These prohibition orders are signed by the Forest Supervisor and should reflect the amended access and travel management for each forest plan. Sample CFR orders can be found in the "Access and Travel Management Northern Region Guide, October 1997." 36 CFR 261.51 and 295.4 require placing a copy of the order in each forest and ranger district office, displaying the order to reasonably bring the prohibition to the attention of the public, and providing information and maps to the public.

Bureau of Land Management - The BLM regulations for OHV's are contained in 43 CFR 8340. After designation or redesignation of public lands, the authorized officer would take action by signing and other appropriate measures to identify designated areas so that the public will be aware of applicable locations and limitations. The authorized officer would make appropriate information material, including maps, available for public review.

Maps

Forest visitor maps, travel maps, BLM recreation maps, or other maps and descriptions distributed to the public would be updated, or an insert prepared, to reflect the direction in the FEIS and ROD. Each national forest, grassland and BLM field office would be responsible for map updates, as soon as practical.

Signs

Signing strategies for Montana, North Dakota and South Dakota are frequently different due to ownership patterns and topography. However, to the extent possible, a consistent approach to signing is desired. Signs should meet Regional/State Office and Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) standards and be maintained in good condition.

Education/Enforcement

Travel restrictions would be enforced with resources available to the FS and BLM. However, it is clear that the success of travel management direction lies in the public understanding its value and generally accepting the restrictions. Education programs with an emphasis on responsible use of OHV's and other forms of backcountry travel are key to developing natural resource ethics.

Monitoring

Monitoring is an important component of implementation of the FEIS and ROD. An OHV Interagency Workgroup has been established that consists of employees from the FS regional office; FS ranger district; BLM state office; BLM field office; Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks State Trails Coordinator; Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation; and representatives from North Dakota and South Dakota. It is the goal of this Interagency Workgroup to provide direction for an OHV program for the States of Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota. They are to provide long-term strategic coordination for planning OHV use, providing education and training opportunities for the public and agencies, and promoting consistent administration of OHV use in the field. The Interagency Workgroup will provide a coordinated approach for direction to field units on OHV issues at a three-state-wide level. The following subgroups have been established to accomplish this goal: Planning; Education and Training; and Field Management/Implementation. National forests and grasslands, and BLM field offices will assist in this implementation.

One of the responsibilities of the OHV Interagency Workgroup will be to conduct annual joint monitoring trips to review the effects of OHV travel in at least two different eco-regions annually (refer to eco-region map in FEIS – Figure 3.1). Field reviews, as funding allows, will include implementation monitoring to assure that signs are installed and maintained, orders are posted and current, and travel management prescriptions are being enforced. Mapping and other elements of program administration will also be reviewed. Results of these monitoring trips will be presented to the Regional Forester and State Director in the form of a report. The primary focus is to verify that the direction is being applied and enforced on the ground and is minimizing further resource damage, user conflicts, and new user-created roads. Monitoring will track agency progress on signing, mapping, prioritizing areas for site-specific planning and progress toward initiating site-specific planning within the time frame identified for the particular priority. This monitoring is not intended to replace the required monitoring at the field level as directed in 43 CFR 8342.3 and 36 CFR 295.5.

PRIORITIZATION FOR SITE-SPECIFIC PLANNING

Introduction

To insure that site-specific planning is initiated in areas of the most need, areas would be identified by three categories

to provide appropriate emphasis for their completion. Priorities for site-specific planning should be coordinated in areas with adjacent BLM and NFS lands. Prioritization for site-specific planning would include delineation of areas and prioritization of areas as high, moderate, or low based on several factors.

Delineation of Areas

Site-specific planning may be analyzed at a number of different scales and across different boundaries, for example by watershed, sub-watershed, agency or field unit. It may also be combined with other planning decision processes such as forest plan revision, project or activity plans, or site-specific access and travel management plans. Selection of the appropriate area size should be based on the level of detailed analysis required and the potential to combine access and travel management planning with other analysis procedures.

Prioritization of Areas

Each BLM field office, national forest and grassland would complete a prioritized list of areas for site-specific planning within six months of the signing of the ROD in close coordination with the public and other partners, such as the Resource Advisory Councils. This list would be submitted to the State Director and Regional Forester.

Factors: When determining the priorities for site-specific planning, the agencies will consider the effects of the FEIS; Executive Orders 11644 and 11989; coordination with the public, other partners, agencies, and tribal governments; and the factors listed below:

- Opportunity to provide a variety of OHV recreational experiences, while minimizing resource damage and conflicts.
- Risk of, or current damage to soil, watersheds, vegetation or other natural, cultural, and historical resources on BLM and NFS lands.
- Potential to spread noxious weeds.
- Avoidance of riparian/wetland areas.
- Need to minimize harassment of wildlife or significant degradation of wildlife habitats.
- Concern for safety of all users.
- Resolution of conflict between interim travel restrictions and established management plans.

- History of new roads and trails being created by users.
- Current or potential impacts to federally listed threatened or endangered, and sensitive species.
- Opportunities to join other planning efforts.
- Special Management Areas.

Categories: For each BLM field office, national forest and grassland, all areas in the affected environment should be included in one of the following categories:

HIGH PRIORITY AREAS - These areas currently have a high level of OHV use that has resulted in resource damage and/or user conflicts. There is a need to address all or most of the factors listed above, in particular resource damage; threatened or endangered, and sensitive species; and public safety. Site-specific planning would be initiated within two years of the resolution of any protests to the FEIS or administrative appeals to the ROD.

MODERATE PRIORITY AREAS - These areas may address some of the factors listed above, as well as identifying areas that could provide OHV opportunities and at the same time minimize user conflicts and resource damage. Site-specific planning would be initiated within five years of the resolution of any protests to the FEIS or administrative appeals to the ROD.

LOW PRIORITY AREAS - These are the remaining areas categorized with minimal OHV use, with the exception of hunting seasons, and are somewhat remote. There may be some localized resource problems, but these problems can be easily rectified with emergency closures until they are resolved. There are no specific requirements for initiation of site-specific planning.

SITE-SPECIFIC PLANNING - ROAD AND TRAIL DESIGNATIONS

Introduction

Travel planning is a key element of the overall land use planning process. The land use planning process is the primary planning vehicle for identifying a travel and transportation system designed to effectively and efficiently meet resource management and visitor services needs. Travel plans identify existing transportation routes and related facilities; indicate changes in the status of existing routes and areas; and address needed improvements, main-

tenance levels and legal access needs. These plans address all modes of transportation, require an interdisciplinary approach, and seek active public involvement. The travel and transportation component is essential to the successful implementation of the overall resource management plan/forest plan and related activity level plans.

After the plan amendment is completed, the BLM field offices and FS ranger districts would continue with ongoing travel management plans, and develop new travel management plans for geographical areas at the appropriate scale or level (i.e., landscape analysis, watershed plans, or activity plans). The development of site-specific plans is dependent on the availability of funds and resources. The level of detail and the types of decisions needed determines the type of plan and related decision documents. Travel planning and decisions can be accomplished as an individual activity plan or completed as part of a larger multi-program plan or large-scale integrated comprehensive landscape level plan.

At this planning level, agencies are seeking to balance access needs of motorized and non-motorized users while maintaining the natural resources for future generations. During this site-specific planning, roads and trails would be analyzed and identified as open or closed to various types of use.

Public involvement is a key component of each step in the site-specific planning process. An environmental analysis is an integral part of each site-specific plan.

Road/Trail Inventory

Through site-specific planning, roads and trails would be inventoried, mapped and designated as open, seasonally open, or closed. The inventory should be commensurate with the analysis needs, issues, desired resource conditions and resource management objectives for the area. This inventory may include system roads and trails, unclassified roads and trails, non-system trails, and roads and trails on existing visitor/recreation maps and transportation plans.

Site-specific planning would identify appropriate road and trail locations and types of allowable use based on forest plan and resource management plan desired conditions and management objectives. In addition, site-specific planning may identify areas for trail construction and/or improvement, or specific areas where intensive OHV use may be appropriate. Integration of other resource objectives and other types of recreational use would be incorporated at this time.

User Needs

Site-specific planning would identify issues needing resolution at the site-specific level. The following procedure would be followed:

1. Define the scope of the analysis. The boundaries of the area to be analyzed would be the prioritized areas for site-specific planning. As part of the travel planning initiation, the agencies must also provide direction for the types of vehicle travel to be analyzed and the seasons of use to be considered.
2. Identify and describe vehicle travel needs on individual roads and trails. Consider the reasons for needing access to the area, what travel mode is needed or desired, and why people choose to participate in a specific activity in a particular place. Is access needed for:
 - meeting management objectives? (recreation opportunities and demand)
 - commodity production?
 - water production?
 - tribal treaty rights?
 - special use permits? (concessionaires, communication sites, utility corridors)
 - rights-of-way, legal access, easements, cost-share, or prescriptive rights?
 - ad hoc communities, subdivisions, or private in holdings?
 - hazardous waste remediation or watershed restoration?
 - fire protection or law enforcement?
 - barrier-free recreation opportunities or special access accommodations as needed by individuals?
 - other access needs?

3. Identify and describe needs or reasons to limit travel on individual roads and trails. Consider the potential effects of different uses on:
 - wildlife habitat
 - water quality
 - threatened and endangered species habitat
 - cultural resources
 - native vegetation
 - facility protection
 - public safety
 - conflicting uses
 - tribal treaty rights
 - special management areas
 - other access restriction needs

Development of Alternatives

Travel planning alternatives should reflect a range of distribution strategies for agency and public land users. The distribution strategies must balance requirements for travel restrictions with the needs for vehicle travel. They must also address the forest plan or resource management plan objectives for the area. Travel planning prescriptions should be developed for roads, trails and areas within the analysis area.

Decision - Permanent Transportation System

Completion of site-specific planning for an area will establish a permanent transportation system for that particular area through the designation of roads and trails open, open seasonally, or closed for a particular use.